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THE

VOTER
TO REVIEW



JOURNAL

a newsletter for local government study commissions

Vol. 1

Helena, Montana 59601

November 1975

HELLO...OUT THERE....

A number of study commission members have suggested that it would be helpful to know more about what other commissions are thinking and doing. This newsletter will be an opportunity for study commissioners to exchange ideas and to let each other in on the progress of their review and the alternatives they are considering.

The State Commission will be sending out this newsletter to all study commissions, but we hope you'll be providing the information and even writing the copy. SEND US progress reports on what your commission is thinking of recommending. LET US KNOW what effective methods you have used to stimulate public interest and debate. What kind of publicity has given you the best results? Are there any funny anecdotes you'd like to SHARE with other commissions?

The State Commission is sensitive to the fact that individual study commissions would like to make their recommendations public at their own discretion. We don't want to undermine your efforts. Yet it will be helpful for study commissions to know how other commissions are dealing with specific governmental problems.

We're all in this together and we can learn from each other's mistakes, miseries, excitements and triumphs. As the pace of the Voter Review intensifies, this newsletter can serve as a much needed communications outlet. We'll publish the Voter Review Journal once a month, so start sending in items and articles of interest to:

Arnold Malina, Public Information
State Commission on Local Government
Capitol Station
Helena, Montana 59601

or call: 449-2814.



"Democracy is not something which is in Washington--it is in our hearts, minds, home, communities. If it lives there it will live in the big light, and if it dies in our communities it will die in the world."

Ernest O. Melby



NOTES FROM STUDY COMMISSIONS*

1. Two members of the Deer Lodge Board of County Commissioners have recommended to their county study commissions the consolidation of Anaconda with Deer Lodge County.

2. Deer Lodge County and Granite County are investigating the possibility of consolidating their Superintendent of Schools offices.

3. Manhattan is considering recommending the Town Meeting form of government.

4. The Yellowstone County Study Commission is considering writing their own charter to obtain self-government powers.

5. The Jordan Study Commission is seriously thinking of recommending disincorporation.

6. The Granite County and Philipsburg Study Commissions are actively researching a city-county law enforcement proposal with the assistance of the State Crime Control Commission.

7. Toole County is taking a hard look at consolidating the office of Clerk and Recorder with another office.

8. The Forsyth Study Commission is either considering proposing the Commission-manager form or making minor modifications in their present form. The commission will almost certainly propose the creation of an additional ward to remedy the under-represented south side of town.

9. The Ravalli County Commissioners have told their county study commission that they favor the appointment of an administrative assistant and increasing the size of the county board.

10. Flathead County's Study Commission has developed working papers suggesting a commission-chairman form of government, an elected county executive form and a large board of county commissioners to function strictly as a policy-making body.

11. Walt Sales, Gallatin County Commissioner, was quoted recently as advocating a county manager form of government and part-time, policy-making county commissioners.

12. The Miles City Study Commission is investigating city-county service sharing; members also are giving serious thought to the commission-manager form of government.

13. The Columbia Falls commission is considering disincorporation contingent upon what the county study commission comes up with. The members are organizing a meeting (late October) of all study commissions in the county to discuss each other's work.

*These items come from newspaper articles.

SEND US YOUR PHOTO

For historical purposes we would like a collection of pictures of the 182 local study commissions. Would you please take a black and white photo of your Commission and send us one or two copies? We would also appreciate receiving black and white photos and/or color slides of public hearings and meetings.

PUBLIC HEARINGS PLUS

Many study commissions have added some festive community participation to their public hearings.....At the Lake County meeting, choral music, an invocation, the Boy Scouts leading the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance, and a talk on "the Spirit of '76," preceded reports by the commission....at the Glendive-Dawson County joint hearing, Dawson County High School government students acted as scribes in group discussions....back in June, the Big Timber-Sweetgrass County public hearing featured the Golden Age Warblers.....the Havre commission opened their meeting with the Havre High School Hi-Liters singing "Montana," "America the Beautiful" and a musical arrangement of the Pledge of Allegiance....the Richey meeting centered around the theme "Appreciation Night," wherein the efforts of former town officials were duly acknowledged by the townspeople. The Richey High School music department performed, a slide profile of Richey and talks on the work of the fire department and ambulance crew were presented.

SEPTEMBER PUBLIC HEARINGS FEATURED VERY GOOD ATTENDANCE

Glendive, Dawson County.....	50	Butte.....	85
Havre, Hill County.....	100	Silver Bow County..	125
Miles City, Custer County.....	50	Billings.....	175
Chinook, Blaine County.....	57	Glasgow.....	73
Lake County.....	200	Toole County.....	125
Richey.....	150	Helena.....	60

LET US KNOW
WHAT YOU'D
LIKE TO SEE
PRINTED
IN THIS
NEWSLETTER
BETTER YET,
SUBMIT THE
ITEMS
YOURSELVES.

SMALL TOWNS GET TOGETHER

THE TOWN OF STANFORD, ACTING ON THE BELIEF THAT SMALL TOWNS HAVE MANY COMMON PROBLEMS, HOSTED A MEETING OF FIVE OTHER SMALL TOWN STUDY COMMISSIONS ON SEPTEMBER 12 TO DISCUSS AREAS OF COMMON INTEREST. COMMISSION MEMBERS FROM HOBSON, MOORE, WINIFRED, GERALDINE, JUDITH GAP AND STANFORD ATTENDED.



"Everything you always wanted to know about home rule."

ACTIVITIES OF SELECTED STUDY COMMISSIONS

The following are brief descriptions of some of the activities of a few local government study commissions. These are not necessarily the most active or the most interesting study commissions and they were not selected on the basis of any carefully arrived at criteria. They are cited as examples of the kind of things that are happening. This is, therefore, merely a representative sampling. We would appreciate it if study commissions sent us profiles of the kind of work they are engaged in; we'll print such profiles in future issues.

BILLINGS

Each study commissioner on the Billings City Study Commission has written a position paper describing his preference for an alternative form of government. These papers culminated the study of their present form of government which included task force reports and extensive interviews with city officials and employees. The Billings commission has been particularly innovative in their creation of "citizen task forces." The task forces on legal research, public information and finance are composed of local experts in their respective areas. They serve without pay and have provided the study commission with valuable input. In addition to the specialized task forces mentioned above, the Billings Chamber of Commerce has submitted a report to the study commission on goals and objectives in local government. Although the study of the present form continues, the attention of the study commission is now toward studying the alternatives they will propose in 1976. More centralized executive authority is discussed, but the debate is focusing on whether the executive will be elected or appointed. A charter is also being considered. Attention is also being directed to service transfers with the county and various cooperative service arrangements. Most recently, a task force of engineers was formed to study the county road and city street departments and the offices of city engineer and county surveyor.

DANIELS COUNTY

The Daniels County Study Commission has been one of the most active county study commissions in an area of the state where activity on the county level has been quite low. This commission has held regular monthly meetings since December. The commission members continued to meet during the summer. This spring the Daniels County Study Commission prepared a detailed thirty page report on the present form and powers of county government. This informative report was distributed throughout the county. The commission held three public hearings in April at Peerless, Flaxville and Scobey. The commission interviewed past and present county officials. They have explained the purpose and duties of their study commission in schools and various service clubs in the county. This commission, to date, has not determined the alternative form which they will present to the voters of Daniels County.

LEWISTOWN

The Lewistown Study Commission has been meeting at least twice a month since January. They have interviewed local officials and used the interviews as the basis of a series of newspaper articles on city government. Members have spoken before civic groups, high school classes and on a radio talk show to explain the work of the study commission and to solicit ideas and opinions about the needs of the community. Jointly with the Fergus County Study Commission, they sponsored a booth at the county fair and designed and distributed an exceptionally attractive brochure to explain the Voter Review process. They held their public hearing in July, and most recently sponsored a workshop to discuss the manager form of government.

MISSOULA - MISSOULA COUNTY

Missoula and Missoula County agreed early to form a joint commission; they are probably the most active group in the state. The commission is certain that they want a unified government within the county, though they are uncertain regarding the strategy they should use to accomplish this end. They are in the process of drafting a county charter, and committed to increasing the size of their county commission. In October they voted to recommend a county administrator to the electorate. They have held numerous public hearings with active audience participation. Commission members are knowledgeable about local government, committed to reform and cognizant of the problems of achieving reform. They also keep the staff of the State Commission busy answering legal questions.

RICHEY

The Richey Study Commission is one of the most interesting commissions in the northeastern area. Richey is a small closely-knit community. The activities of their study commission reflect a lively community spirit. The commission meets regularly. They have interviewed past and present town officials and have compiled their findings in report form. They have published reports on their review in the local newspapers and have attended most of the workshops in Eastern Montana. The commission members produced their own slide series on the history of Richey and the present form of local government. The study commission held its public meeting in conjunction with a community appreciation pot-luck dinner for present and former town officials. Richey is a small community with a limited tax base. The commission will most likely propose the commission-executive form with minor alterations of the present form.

YELLOWSTONE COUNTY

The Yellowstone County Study Commission is actively engaged in writing a charter for submission to the electorate at a tentatively scheduled September, 1975 election. Several public hearings have been held in Billings and Laurel to determine public preference on such matters as an appointed manager or an elected executive, number and method of selecting commissioners and partisan or non-partisan elections, to name a few. The study commission meets regularly and is seeking to involve citizen "task forces" the way Billings has. The task forces are comprised of professionals in their respective fields and should be able to provide in-depth research reports to the study commission.

HAVRE

The Havre Study Commission began their study with a series of interviews of city officials and members of various boards and commissions. These interviews were described in lengthy newspaper articles. The Local Government Review Simulation is currently being used in the local high school and they intend to encourage other schools on the "High-Line" to use it. A summer intern was hired through the intern program at the University of Montana to do research on possible areas of service transfers and consolidation of services with the county. Their public hearing which they held on September 17th was well publicized in a series of newspaper articles authored by each study commissioner. The hearing was attended by more than 100 people.

SANDERS COUNTY

The Sanders County study commission distributed a questionnaire at their county fair. Results showed that the people of Sanders county favored city-county law enforcement and favored road maintenance performed under one engineer with one budget rather than under three engineers with three separate budgets. The survey also revealed dissatisfaction with health services and the accountability of county officials but indicated that most residents prefer the three commissioner government if elections could be by district and non-partisan.

THAT'S ALL FOR THIS ISSUE. START SENDING IN ARTICLES (you decide what kind) AND EDITORIALS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES YOU FEEL STRONGLY ABOUT SO THAT IN THE COMING MONTHS THE VOTER REVIEW JOURNAL WILL BE REFLECTIVE OF THE WORK YOU ARE DOING AND THEREFORE A VALUABLE NEWSLETTER FOR ALL COMMISSIONS.

VOTER REVIEW

State Commission on Local Government
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59601

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